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AUTHOR Bussard, Ellen
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ABSTRACT

At the same time that schools are closing in many communities because of declining enrollments, the arts are expanding at the community level. The problem of surplus school space can be the solution to the needs of many artists and arts groups. Mutual to the arts groups and the communities are the benefits of flexible arrangements and the presence of desirable tenants who enrich the neighborhood as a community resource. Arguments sometimes raised against locating the arts in surplus school space center around obtaining top dollar for schools, occupancy restrictions, costs of changing occupancy, and fears that the arts are financially risky. These possible disadvantages have been overcome in 23 cases in a variety of communities that demonstrate a range of spatial, financial, programmatic, and governance arrangements, and a broad spectrum of arts uses. Guidelines are offered for carrying out similar projects in other communities. (MLF)

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THE ARTS IN SURPLUS SCHOOLS

This is an advocacy report, to
ourage the reuse of surplus
lic schools -- and under-used
tions of operating schools -- for
arts. We point out the advan-
es of surplus school space and
s arrangements to both the public
ools and to arts organizations
artists. We cite case examples
a variety of communities, demon-
ating a range of spatial, finan-
l, programmatic and governance
angements, and a broad spectrum
arts uses. Finally we conclude
a review of some of the lessons
ived from the case studies that
serve as guidelines in carrying
similar projects in other
munities.

EFL has been researching, writing
providing assistance on school
ollment decline and reuse
nning since the early 1970's.
ing the same time we've been
viding information and assis-
tance, often with National Endowment for the Arts support, on arts facilities planning. This report, supported by the Design Arts Program of the Arts Endowment, and prepared for the October 1981 Arts Edge Conference in Pittsburgh, is thus a logical confluence of two areas of EFL interest.

We thank Michael Pittas and the Design Arts Program for their support, and for the opportunity to advance an idea that we believe makes good sense for so many communities.

EFL's Ellen Bussard researched and wrote the report with Beryl Fields' assistance. The idea for the report was developed by Alan Green, who contributed writing and editorial comment. We hope you find the idea of merit, and encourage you to seek out surplus school space and arts arrangements in your community.

EFL/AED

CONTEXT 3

CASE STUDIES 9

GUIDELINES 29

Prepared by
Educational Facilities Laboratories
Sponsored by
National Endowment for the Arts,
Design Arts Program

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ISBN 0-88481-246-4

SCHOOL
33

CASE STUDIES

A Museum Grows in a School

The Madison Art Center, Wisconsin

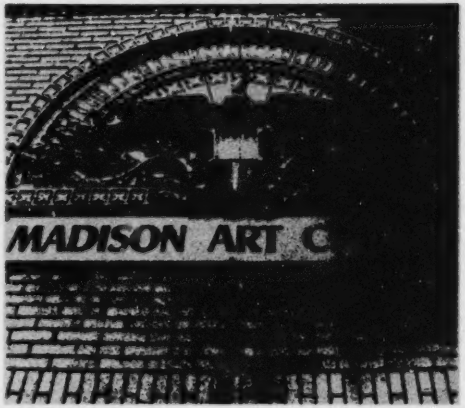
The old Lincoln School in Madison was until recently the location of a major art museum operated by a private community art organization, Madison Art Center, Inc.

Before use of the school was acquired in 1964, through a $1 per year lease from the city, the Madison Art Association had been actively engaged in exhibits, lectures and educational programs that were scheduled in temporary borrowed space.

With the school, a museum -- with a permanent collection that has grown to over 2500 pieces -- could be properly established. Activities of the Center mushroomed to include development of touring exhibits; major exhibits of regional, national, and international artists; study rooms for students interested in studying the museum's collection in depth; film and lecture series; and a full-fledged community educational program with studios for painting, sculpture, photography, and ceramics. The center initiated travelling exhibits and workshops for schools in the metropolitan region.

The Madison Art Center is a good example of what an ambitious community organization can achieve through continuous effort, without major government subsidy. The school building was renovated in stages, as money was raised. Darkrooms, studios, a little theater -- each allowed an expansion of community programs which have been a vital part of the Center.

Having grown up in the Lincoln School, a year ago the Center moved its operations to a new community civic center, located on the main street of downtown Madison, in a totally renovated movie palace and former department store.



Madison Art Center, Inc.
211 State Street
Madison, WI 53703
608-257-0158
Cathy A. Silbiger, Director of Community Relations

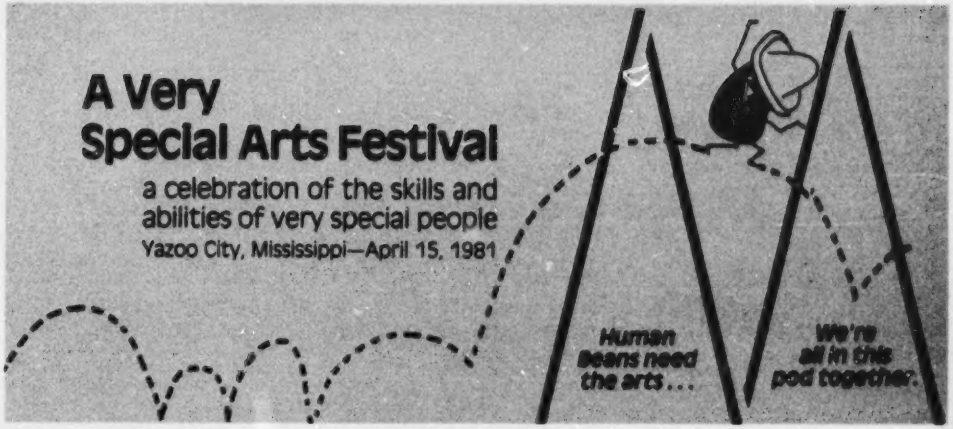
Library Saves a School and Spawns a Cultural Center

Triangle Cultural Center, Yazoo, Mississippi

When the Yazoo School Board announced construction of a new high school and the intended closing of the old Main Street School, trustees and friends of the adjacent Ricks Library launched a campaign to buy the historic building and its site for community use.

After two years of planning and laying the groundwork, the building closed as a school in the summer of 1977 and reopened as the Triangle Cultural Center in the fall. The city and county bought the building for $150,000 and deeded it to the library, which in turn rented it to a newly formed TCC, Inc. for $1 a year. Representatives of all twenty-two community groups that initially expressed interest in the building serve on the center's board of directors.

The center has studios and workshops for art, dance, music and photography that are available for use by teachers for classes, or for use by organizations. Fees are assessed based on time and space used.


A Very
Special Arts Festival
a celebration of the skills and abilities of very special people
Yazoo City, Mississippi—April 15, 1981
Human beans need the arts...
We're all in this pod together.

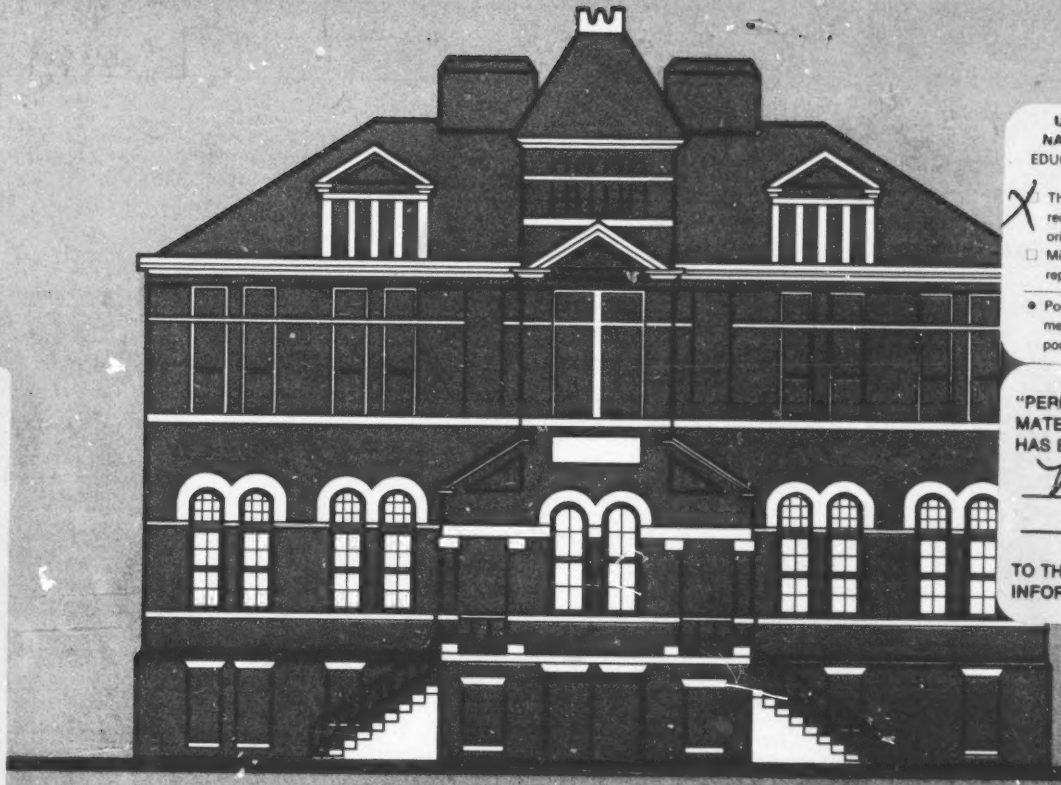
The 350-seat theater was renovated, and enlarged by removing the ceiling and installing a balcony. A community drama group presents plays in the theater, and the Arts Council books nationally touring musicians, dance and theater groups. The theater is also available as meeting space for local organizations.

The entire third floor of the 1903 building has become a local historical museum, and most of the basement has been renovated as a bar and restaurant, with a banquet room available. The area used by the bar and restaurant was renovated by the center, and is rented to a private restaurateur. His $10,000 annual rent will pay back the renovation cost, and then contribute to the center. Space on the first floor is rented for another entrepreneurial venture -- a book and crafts store. These commercial aspects of the center are possible because the building is owned by the library, and libraries in Mississippi have a great deal of leeway in their operations.

Triangle Cultural Center
322 North Main Street
P.O. Box 575
Yazoo City, MS 39194
601-746-2273
Linda Crawford, Executive Director

ED222267

EA 015 815



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THE ARTS IN SURPLUS SCHOOLS

CONTEXT

Enrollment Decline and Surplus Schools

The number of young people attending America's public schools will have declined 16% from 1971 to 1984, from 46.1 million to 38.5 million students. Presently the decline is moving from the elementary grades, where it began in the early 1970's, into the middle grades and on into the high school. By the late 1980's high school enrollment will have declined by 25% from the 1976 peak.

The cause of the decline is basically simple: Americans are having fewer children and family size is shrinking. The impacts of decline are complex, creating pressure on local school finances, staffing, programs and facilities. For this report, the impact of space is the problem -- and the opportunity. Some 7,000 schools are no longer used for public education. More will be de-accessioned, and surplus space is available for re-use in thousands of other operating school buildings.

Two questions immediately come to mind: Is this a short-term problem, and is it unique to one region of the country or to one type of school district?

It is not short-term. While elementary enrollments will begin to increase again by the early 1990's, there is no likelihood that total school enrollment will reach the peaks of the 1970's during the 20th century. School districts will have to cope with surplus space for years to come.

Although decline is greater in the northeast and mid-west (accelerated by population shifts to the sun-belt), all regions of the country are affected. The centers of large cities, first and second ring suburbs, and small cities and towns are all affected. Thousands of local communities and their school boards are wrestling with the problem of space no longer needed for education.

The types of surplus space vary greatly. Older and smaller elementary schools were the first to become available, but now more newer schools and larger schools are coming on the market. (A few communities have finished building new schools, just in time to close them.) Sometimes only part of a school -- a few classrooms, or a wing -- is unused and surplus.

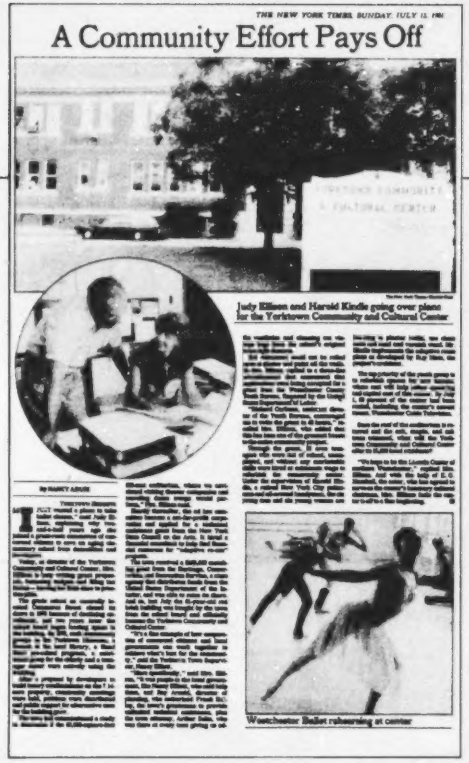
Many of the older schools are handsome, even architecturally and historically significant. Some of the more recent are one-story, finger plan schools. Although uninspired in design, they are easily adaptable for access by the handicapped.

Closing schools for education is

traumatic. The need to reduce space and cost is great, but so are the passions of parents and citizens who want to keep schools open. Closed schools are a loss to the community, and vacant buildings or incompatible reuse may have a negative impact on neighborhoods. So boards, administrators and citizens actively seek solutions that help the district eliminate unneeded space and meet financial objectives, and that offer reuses acceptable to the neighborhood and beneficial to the community.

Enter the Arts

In spite of financial constraints, the arts are booming, especially at the neighborhood and community level. The increase in arts organizations, arts activities, and participation has been dramatic. Typically community arts organizations are small in scale — an artists collaborative, a community theater, a neighborhood arts center. They are modestly financed, lacking capital funds to acquire or build major buildings, and heavily dependent on volunteers and part-time professionals. Local arts centers may include branches of an established, "downtown" museum, arts school, or performing arts institution, or may provide a stage where such groups can reach new audiences.


THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, JULY 13, 1980

A Community Effort Pays Off

Judy Ellison and Harold Kindle going over plans for the Yorktown Community and Cultural Center

Westchester Ballet rehearsing at center

Local arts organizations draw talent, financial support , audiences and constituents from the community. They often need a modest amount of space that is inexpensive to acquire and operate. That space needs to be conveniently located in the community.

For years artists and the arts have led the "recycling" movement. From lofts and warehouses, to storefronts, churches, and firehouses, the arts have created homes in "found space." Add now another building type to the repertory: the surplus school.

Perfect Harmony: Often, but not Always

One person's loss is another's gain. The problem of surplus school space can be the solution to the needs of many artists and arts groups. Consider some of the mutual benefits:

Costs to acquire and operate: A school typically costs between $2

nd $4 a square foot per year to perate -- utilities, custodial and asic maintenance, and insurance. f there remains bonded indebted-ess, the annual cost will be igher. Even so, the cost for enting or leasing such space on a reak-even basis is lower than ommercial space. Often a school oard will be delighted to have hese costs covered by a use that is cceptable to the neighborhood, as rts uses tend to be.

The cost of purchasing a surplus chool is usually far less than the ost of building equivalent new pace. The only exception occurs hen the location is prime for ommercial development.

Flexible arrangements: For chool boards, critical questions eal with an unknown future: Will we ome day need the space again? How an we hedge our bets? Leasing or enting surplus space or an entire chool for a few years is a good way o hedge for the future. Often such hort-term arrangements are also deal for arts groups just starting o, or expanding and needing an interim home. If the arts group is viewed as a compatible use, if it can cover a share of the on-going operating costs of the space, and if it is comfortable with a short-term arrangement, then arts use is not only feasible, but a very desirable solution.

Quick response: Surplus space can be acquired quickly. Once the decision to close has been made, and even more so if the building is standing empty, the community and school board will want the new tenants in place quickly to avoid or minimize vandalism.

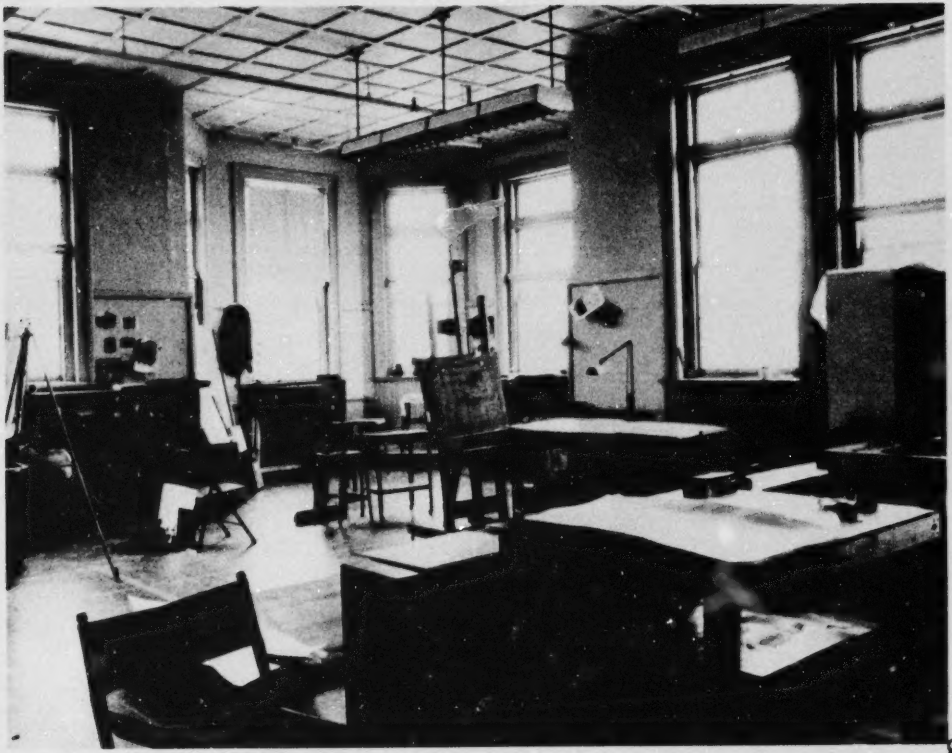
Who can be against the arts?: Compared to other possible uses for surplus school space, the arts are usually viewed as desirable, or at least benign. Arts uses are less likely to have noise, heavy traffic, or "undesirables;" and are less likely to present legal or zoning difficulties.

Good space, easily adapted: The facilities that make up a school are easily used for the arts with few major, costly changes to the building. Classrooms make good studios and rehearsal space; shops are shops; offices are offices; and auditoriums and gymnasiums can become theaters and performance halls with little change. And school sites usually provide parking, and outdoor areas for exhibits, performances, and gatherings of all sorts.

Arts and education: Artists and arts groups using surplus schools can go beyond being mere tenants. They can enrich the arts offerings in the district's schools. An arts group seeking school space may negotiate by offering arts classes and experiences for gifted students -- or to complement the regular curriculum -- in exchange for space, utilities, maintenance services and the like.

The arts can find new audiences and participants while school districts can strengthen arts curricula, too often the first victims of budget cuts.

The school and the community: Many school districts develop programs that cause their schools to become active community centers by serving the very young, elderly, parents, and young adults, as well



serving the very young, elderly, parents, and young adults, as well as school-age young people. The rationale is both ideological and practical. The school is a logical focus for many human services. Support for local tax-funded education can be generated by expanding those served by the school. Arts in surplus school space is consistent with the notion of school/community use, and the buildings tend to be well located to play such a role.

Though no longer a school, still a public use: A closed school is a loss to a community, but if it must be abandoned for education, most neighbors would far prefer to see it remain a community resource than become a parking lot, an office building, multi-family housing, or worst of all, a boarded-up derelict.

After all, goes the argument, we paid for it and maintained it from our taxes; we should continue to derive public benefit from it. Reusing a surplus school for the arts, especially if programs are offered that serve the larger community, meets the desire for public use and

educes local frustrations and
nger.

ometimes Disharmony

et us not leave the impression that
ocating the arts in surplus school
pace is always a perfect match.
isharmony is possible from several
ources. To cite the most common:

Let's get the most money for the chool we can: Citizens and board embers who tend to be most concern-d with the "bottom line" will argue hat surplus buildings and sites hould be sold to the highest bidder - and preferably put back on the ax roles. Often such persons verestimate the school's market alue and are chagrined when no urchaser steps forward to pay the rice. If the highest and best rice prevails, use of the school by rts interests is not likely, or, at est, the decision to include the rts will be delayed.

School boards shouldn't be in he real estate business: In some uarters the view prevails that school districts are strictly in the business of educating pupils and certainly shouldn't be leasing or renting space for non-educational purposes. In such cases, the school board may turn the building over to the recreation commission, town board, or some other third party. This agency becomes the managing agent with whom arts groups must negotiate.

Zoning, parking, occupancy restrictions: For those who don't want the school to close -- or have some other use for which they are lobbying -- several kinds of objections to arts use may be raised. For instance, it will be argued that the zoning doesn't allow such use, that the arts will draw crowds and traffic and that parking is inadequate, that state or local laws restrict the type of occupancy to "education," or that the school district will incur liabilities not covered by insurance, bonds, or other protection. Sometimes these objections can be negotiated or proved to be groundless. Sometimes they become no-win battles that render the proposition hopeless.

The costs of changing occupancy: Often school buildings are exempt from local building and occupancy codes affecting health and safety standards. New standards may apply when other uses, such as the arts, are introduced. Operating costs to meet a new set of standards may make their use financially unsound.

The arts are financially risky: Some school boards will be reluctant to lease to arts organizations that are financially weak. Will the rent be paid, can the operating costs be covered (especially if the winter is severe and the final bill is higher than budgeted), will we (the board) have to bail them (the arts) out when we are already over budget?

In spite of these hazards, the scale of experience clearly tips in the direction of the arts as a creative, intelligent, and mutually beneficial user of surplus school space. Our initial advocacy position is more often borne out by experience than not. The case examples that follow offer rich evidence in its support.

Twenty Year Search for County Arts Home Leads to High School

Maryland Hall for the Creative Arts, Annapolis, Maryland

A twenty year search for a home for the arts in Anne Arundel County finally led to the former Annapolis Senior High School, closed in 1978.

The center is governed by a board of directors, representing major supporting agencies: county government, county board of education, Anne Arundel Fine Arts Foundation, County Council, and the Maryland Hall Commission, an advisory group of citizens.

The three-story, 68,000 square foot building is used for artist studios, classes, workshops, and performances. Twelve artist studios are available for annual rent at $3 per square foot. Over 100 courses in dance, visual arts, music and writing are offered each semester, with a proportion of class fees going to support the center.

The center has been used for rehearsals, productions, and workshops by over thirty-five arts organizations. In addition, the center has initiated a young adult theater, a community band, and a youth jazz ensemble. A touring company of five professional actors gives presentations at county schools and parks, using the center as its home base.

Major organizations, such as the ballet, symphony, and opera, use the center facilities for offices, and storage.

The school board continues to own the building, while Maryland Hall for the Creative Arts, Inc. manages the operations, under terms of a rent-free use agreement. Major renovations to the 1932 building have included making it accessible to the handicapped, rewiring of the electrical system, and repairs to the roof. Tenants are responsible for painting and furnishing their own space.

Maryland Hall for the Creative Arts, Inc.
Constitution Ave. and Greenfield St.
P.O. Box 188
Annapolis, MD 21404
301-263-5544
Susan Gans, Executive Director

Town Meeting Selects Arts Reuse

Arts-Wayland, Masschusetts

At a New England town meeting in 1980, Wayland residents voted to reuse the fourth school to be closed in that community for a variety of uses, with arts as the major one.

Arts-Wayland is both a foundation and a separate association of artists and supporters. The group rents 70% of the 40,000 square foot, former elementary school, located on a wooded 17-acre site. More than 30 artists and writers rent space for studios. Day and evening courses and special workshops are offered to the community in subjects ranging from pottery to cartooning. Summer sessions in theater are held for children. Arts-Wayland also offers numerous performances, exhibitions and lectures.

A nonprofit school, Bay State Dance and Gymnastics, offers over 50 courses, using the gymnasium and several classrooms.

In choosing these tenants from among the applicants who sought to

lease space, the town's committee on school reuse used as one criterion that they "offer some form of direct benefit by way of programming and/or resources, for residents of Wayland." Annual rent, assessed at $2 per square foot just about covers operating costs; the former school is anticipated to be fully self-supporting within a few years.

Arts-Wayland Foundation, Inc.
P.O. Box 272
Wayland, MA 01778
Mimi Rogers, President

Dr. William Zimmerman, Jr.
Superintendent of Schools
41 Cochituate Road
Wayland, MA 01778
617-358-7728

Headquarters for County-Wide Arts Service Agencies

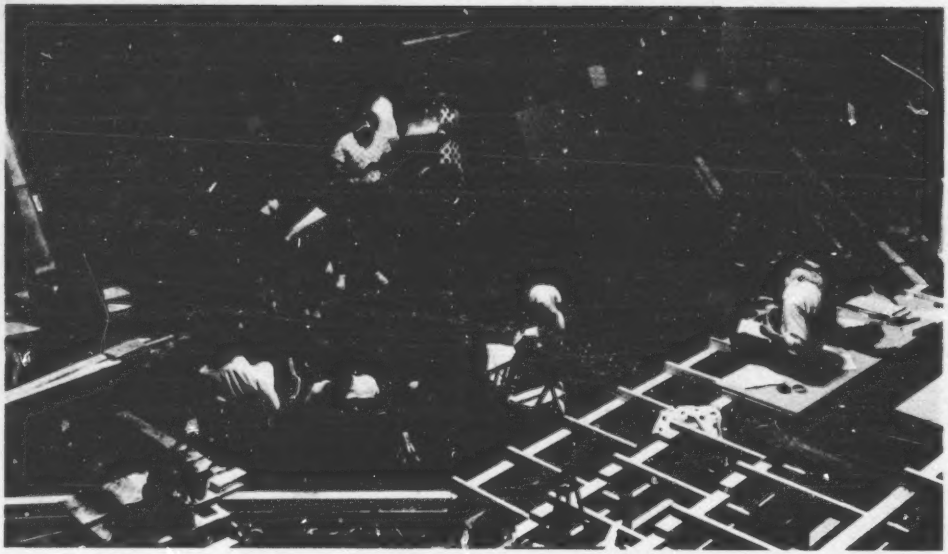
Gunston Arts Center, Arlington, Virginia

Gunston Arts Center, occupying about one third of a 90,000 square foot former junior high school, is the headquarters for a wide range of Visual and Performing Arts programs run by Arlington County's Office of Community Affairs.

Visual and Performing Arts had been scattered in locations throughout the county, including a small surplus elementary school, when it heard that the junior high school was to close in the summer of 1978. Community residents wanted the huge facility to remain in public use, and the county's adult education and recreation programs were also interested in using space there. The building reopened in the fall as the Gunston Community Complex, with space equally divided among recreation, adult education, and visual and performing arts.

Visual and Performing Arts provides a range of technical assistance to over a dozen community arts organizations; initiates educational programs and workshops for interested community children and adults provides open studio facilities and coordinates use of publicly owned performance facilities in the county, and initiates and runs programs for the county school district.

Activities undertaken by V&PA include: assistance or provision of services in set design, lighting, and costumes for community theater groups; workshops in those areas; training and certification in use of theatrical equipment; training of a large volunteer corps to teach art, weaving and other skills at community centers and senior citizen centers; organization of art exhibits in public parks and nature centers; classes in dance and theater; courses in technical theater for junior and senior high school students and an intensive summer session for kids; and assistance to organizations in administrative, publicity, and fund-raising areas o



arts management. They helped to initiate and now manage an artists-in-the-schools program for the school district and arrange tutorial and internship experiences with artists for interested students.

Four fully-equipped studios (jewelry, pottery, weaving, and printmaking) are available to county residents who have demonstrated competence with studio equipment. Two of these studios are in Gunston and two are located in another surplus school. In addition V&PA schedules rehearsals and performances for community groups (symphony, orchestra, barbershop quartets, readers theater, adult and children's theater groups) in the Gunston center, in another surplus school, and two other locations.

The school board continues to own the facility, and the county pays for operating costs of the art center portion, about $60,000 a year. The county also underwrites direct costs of V&PA staff (about $80,000). Community organizations are free to use the resources of V&PA, but must raise all of the program money themselves.

Arlington County Visual and
Performing Arts
300 North Park Drive
Arlington, VA 22203
703-558-2161
Janet Daeger, Supervisor

Arts Center of Spartanburg County, South Carolina

Relocation of the Spartanburg County Arts Council, Inc. to a two-story school in downtown Spartanburg has provided greater visibility to arts activities and permitted expansion of programs and services. One sign of interest and active support has been the increase in membership in the Council, which serves as a clearinghouse for information and provides support services to member organizations, as well as organizing events and programs of its own. Before moving to the former school

in 1975, the council had 27 member organizations; today over 50 organizations are members.

The two-story school, about 43,000 square feet, has classrooms, studios, and workshops; exhibition space; small offices for rent to member organizations; a theater; a dance studio; and Council offices.

In 1975 the Council signed a lease with the school board, for a nominal rent, for use of two thirds of the building. The lease was conditional on the Council's being able to raise pledges for $300,000 -- the estimated operating cost of the space for five years. With the help of an anonymous $100,000 matching pledge, and contributions from over a thousand donors, the Council was able to meet the condition and open the new center in less than six months. The school district continued to occupy one wing of the building for reading and audio-visual aids centers.

In 1977 the Council took advantage of a second clause written into the original lease -- an option to buy the entire building and its 5-acre site for $200,000.

The building has been made accessible to the handicapped; the theater has been renovated; a dance studio has been installed; and small offices have been created for the Music Foundation, Artists Guild, Garden Club Council, and other associates.

The Arts Council of Spartanburg County, Inc.
Arts Center of Spartanburg County
385 South Spring Street
Spartanburg, SC 29301
803-583-2776
Georgia Allen, Executive Director

Studios for Working Artists

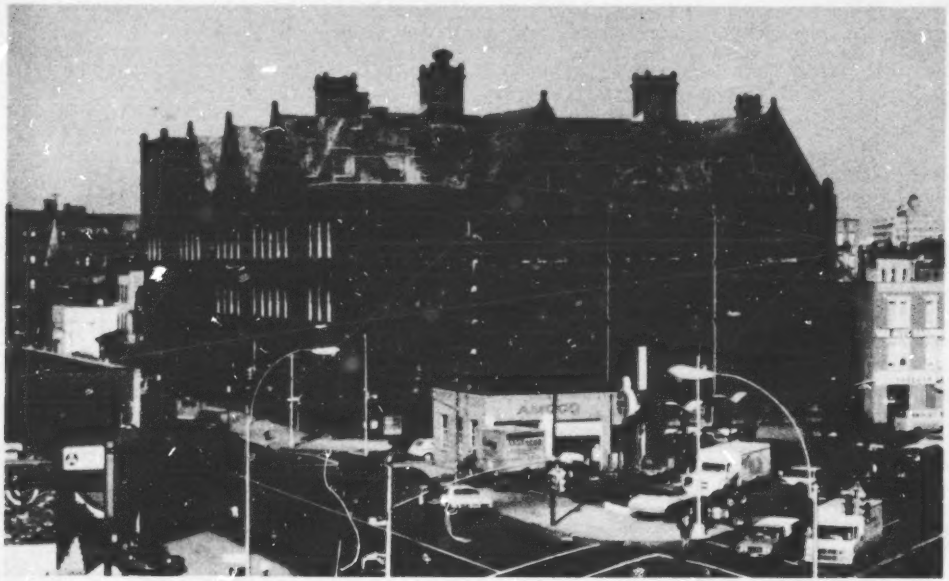
Project Studios One, New York City

One of the early and widely known school conversions is Project Studios One, managed by the Institute for Art and Urban Resources, in Queens, New York.

The Institute was founded in 197[illegible] to locate low cost studio space for artists in New York City, by salvaging abandoned buildings. In 1976 it acquired use of a huge, empty 3-story, 19th century school building under a long-term lease agreement with the city.

Renovations have been minimal -- the goal being to provide warm, weathertight, but otherwise "raw" space for about 50 artists selected for one year residencies. Artists pay between $40-$90/month rent. An international studio program brings artists from six countries to PS One for a year at a time.

In addition to providing studio space, PS One has an 8,000 square foot gallery area used for group and one-person shows, video and music programs.



Project Studios One
Institute for Art and Urban
Resources, Inc.

46-01 21st Street
Long Island City, NY 11101
212-784-2084
Alanna Heiss, President

Arlington Arts Center, Virginia

Since 1976, the Arlington Arts Council has used one of the oldest elementary schools in Arlington County for artist studios and gallery space. About 38 artists, selected through a jury process, occupy 14 studio spaces, paying an annual rent of $4.60 a square foot to the council. Artists have unlimited tenure in the center, and turnover is about 4 or 5 people a year.

The council puts on a variety of exhibitions in the center's gallery space.

While the council pays no rent to the county, it is responsible for building maintenance and operation. Rent for studio space covers this cost.

Arlington Arts Center
3550 Wilson Blvd.
Arlington, VA 22201
703-524-1494
Robert Zwiok, Director

Subsidized Studio Space in Return for Community Service

Noyes Cultural Arts Center, Evanston, Illinois

The City of Evanston leases studio and office space to professional artists and arts organizations at a 40% discount of true cost. In return, tenants provide cultural services to the community. Most tenants offer classes and workshops to the public, and they may take special programs to schools, hospitals, or senior citizen centers, give free public performances or lectures, or participate in special cultural events to meet the community service requirement. Thirty-five resident artists and arts groups rent space, and there is a waiting list. Over 18,000 people used the arts center in 1980.

Auditorium and gymnasium space is available for classes, rehearsals, performances, and other events to tenants and nontenants on an hourly basis.

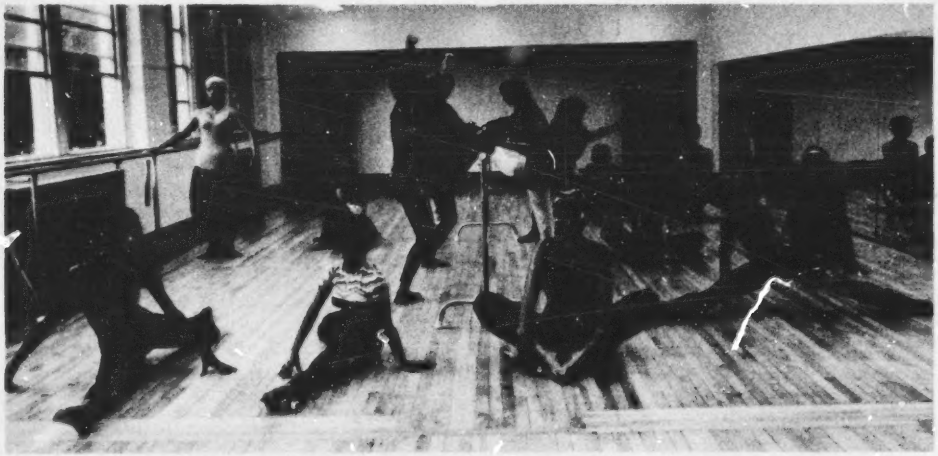
The center is managed by the Evanston Art Council, a city agency. The council reviews applications, artists' work and proposed community service projects in determining whom to accept. It tries to keep a balanced variety of art forms represented -- dance, music, theater, and visual arts.

From 1976, a few months after the school was closed, to 1979, the city leased the building from the school district at the urging of local citizens. The city paid a rental fee based on the cost of one custodian, and also covered utility costs and grounds maintenance. The school district maintained the building. In 1980, the city bought the landmark building for $1.1 million, financed through bond sales. (The sales contract gives the school board the option to repurchase the land after 10 or 15 years, should school enrollment increase such that the district would want to build a new school. The arts center is thus permanently housed, and the school district has a hedge against future needs.)

The Arts Council is now embarked on a major fundraising campaign to restore the building, at a cost of $240,000. The city has agreed to match private donations dollar for dollar.

Evanston Arts Council
Noyes Cultural Arts Center
927 Noyes Street
Evanston, IL 60201
312-491-0266
Joseph Zendell, Executive Director

City Sponsorship



Neighborhood Arts Center, Atlanta, Georgia

The Neighborhood Arts Center was created in 1975 as an offshoot of Arts Festival Atlanta and the mayor's desire to set up satellite art centers throughout the city. One goal of the Center is to make the arts a part of the daily life of a neighborhood that has been neglected by the cultural mainstream.

Artists who work and teach at the Center are black, and the center is a focus for black arts. With support from the city, artists both offer workshops and courses to neighborhood residents and pursue their own work — in dance, photography, drama, writing, and painting. The Center sponsors performances and exhibitions of black artists from other countries and from throughout the Atlanta area.

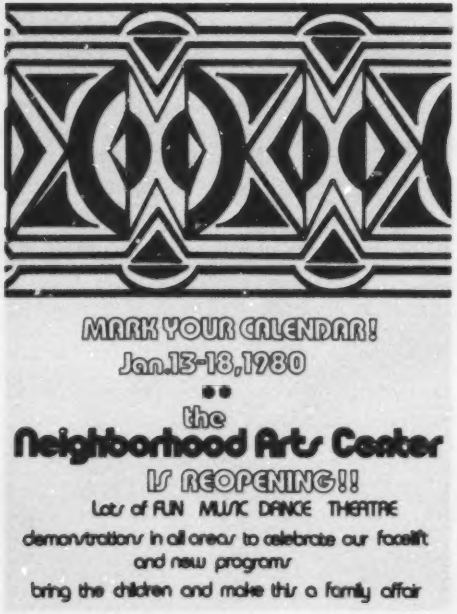
The center is housed in a former elementary school, leased from the city for $1/year.

Neighborhood Arts Center
252 Georgia Avenue, SW
Atlanta, GA 30313
404-523-6458
John Riddle, Jr., Director

School 33 Art Center, Baltimore, Maryland

Baltimore's Victorian School 33 was converted in 1979 to a city-sponsored art center, after lying vacant for three years and undergoing a year and a half of renovation.

Neighborhood residents, who wanted to save the three-story building from demolition and return it to active use, met with the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Art and Culture. At the same time the Committee was looking for improved


MARK YOUR CALENDAR!
Jan.13-18,1980
the
Neighborhood Arts Center
IS REOPENING!!
Lots of FUN MUSIC DANCE THEATRE
demonstrations in all areas to celebrate our facelift
and new programs
bring the children and make this a family affair

space for a program of artist studios and art exhibitions that was poorly housed in another city-owned building.

The extensive renovations cost $200,000 and used a number of federal, city, and state programs. A new heating system was installed and other utilities were upgraded; windows were replaced and the exterior given a face lift; and walls were patched and painted. The basic room layout was not changed, except that a large exhibition space was created on the ground floor by removing two walls.

The center has three major programs: resident artists; workshops and classes; and exhibitions, performances, and demonstrations.

Rotating low-rent studio space supports young and promising artists in the Baltimore area. Nine artists are selected by a city-wide panel, based on portfolio submissions, for a one or two year residency in the center. Each artist pays $75 a month for an individual studio (a 21' x 24' former classroom) and has 24-hour access to it. Studios are open to public viewing once a month.

The ground floor has printmaking, ceramics, and children's workshop space and the main floor includes a darkroom and workshop. The Mayor's Committee sponsors classes and workshops for the public, taught by professional artists.

The central gallery space is used for numerous exhibitions of Baltimore artists and is considered a significant showcase for the city. In addition, it is regularly used for poetry readings, dance and mime performances, music concerts, and artisan demonstrations as part of a Visiting Artists Series.

The center has had a major impact on the South Baltimore neighborhood. Many of the artists who have had space in the building are settling in the area and private galleries and frame shops have moved into the neighborhood.

The center is owned by the city, and managed by the Mayor's Committee on Art and Culture.

School 33 Art Center
1427 Light Street
Baltimore, MD 21230
301-396-4642
Joanne Rijmes, Director

Mayor's Committee on Art and Culture
21 South Eutaw Street
Baltimore, MD 21201
301-396-4575
Jody Albright, Director

Artists Cooperative Downtown

McGuffey Art Center,
Charlottesville, Virginia

The McGuffey Art Center in Charlottesville, Virginia, is run as an artists' cooperative that combines collective benefits for members with service and instruction for the public.

The McGuffey Arts Association, a nonprofit corporation, was established in 1975 to operate a studio and workshop center in a vacant school downtown. The school facility has twenty-three studio rooms, a small office, and a gallery.

The association membership is composed of artists and craftspeople who rent studios in the building, paying $75/month rent for a studio under yearly lease agreements. Many studios are shared by two people. This income is sufficient to cover $11,000 a year that the Association pays to the city under the terms of its second 5-year lease. The city's charge is based on costs for utilities and exterior maintenance.

Association members operate a gallery for sale of their work, and pay a 10% commission to the association. They also teach courses for the public, contributing 10% of teaching income to the association. Since 1979, the association has raised $8,000/year from sales alone.

Under terms of the lease with the city, not only is the center self-supporting, but association members have a number of obligations for community service. Every studio must be open to the public 17 hours a week. Artists give about 50 tours each year to community groups, school classes, and interested individuals. They must be available to give workshops and demonstrations at the center or at community locations and participate in judging local art shows. There is no charge for these activities.

Non-voting associate memberships are available to other area artists who may also sell work through the gallery, paying a 25% commission, or who may teach courses at the center through private arrangement with studio artists, paying the association 15% of their teaching income.

A city-appointed citizens committee recommended this use for the school, in 1975, after the building had been vacant for a year. It was fully operating and self-sustaining within six months.

The city refinished walls and floors in hallways and bathrooms, and upgraded utilities and the building exterior. The artists were responsible for fixing up their own space. Money raised by the association over and above studio rent, is a "bonus." Additional money contributed to the city by the association is used for capital improvements to the building.

McGuffey Arts Association
201 Second Street, NW
Charlottesville, VA 22901
804-295-7973
Michael Van Der Sommen, President

An Industrial Park of Small Arts Businesses

Forrest Avenue Consortium, Atlanta, Georgia

Describing themselves as "an industrial park of small arts businesses," the Forrest Avenue Consortium is a collective of artists who rented a derelict abandoned school in Atlanta, and turned it into studios and specialized facilities for artists throughout the greater Atlanta region. Five groups representing a spectrum of interests and activities form the Consortium: The Composers' Alliance, Pynyon Press and Foundry, a magazine "Contemporary Art/Southeast," Nexus Press Gallery and photographic workshop, and the Dance Unit.

Each group was responsible for renovating its area of the building to meet its needs. Among the facilities are a 300-seat theater, a hand press and full offset press, a darkroom, a foundry, and exhibition space. Members of the consortium pursue their own work, teach and offer programs for neighborhood residents, produce exhibits, and provide services to other artists.

Forrest Avenue Consortium
608 Forrest Avenue, NE
Atlanta, GA 30312
404-688-1970
Kay Leigh Hagan, Assistant Director

Arts as One Component of Community Centers

Yorktown Community and Cultural Center, New York

A large old elementary school in the center of Yorktown Heights is being renovated as a community center, with the arts as one component. A determined group of citizens was instrumental in getting the town to buy the building for $300,000 from the school district rather than allowing private redevelopment as condominiums.

Roughly one quarter of the 60,000 square foot building will be used for arts. Ballet and dance classes are held there now. Once the 600-seat auditorium is refurbished, it will become home to a local theater group and will host performances from visiting theater, music, and dance organizations.

Three quarters of the building houses a number of other community organizations and agencies — Head Start, library, town planning department, town museum, and senior citizen nutrition center among them.

Yorktown Community and Cultural Center
1974 Commerce Street
Yorktown Heights, NY 10598
914-962-5758
Judith Ellison, Director

The 122 Community Center, New York City

A variety of autonomous arts groups form the nucleus of the 122 Community Center, a small turn-of-the-century elementary school in Manhattan. A cooperative of twenty painters occupies roughly one third of the building as studio and exhibition space for members. Two independent dancers teach courses and workshops and use the former multi-purpose room for rehearsal. Mabu Mines, an experimental theater group that performs at New York's Public Theater, uses center space for rehearsals and offices.

In addition to the arts uses, the center houses a city-funded multi-service center for the neighborhood, and a day care center. The building is also opened for special community events and meetings.

This coalition of users collectively forms the 122 Community Center, Inc., a private, nonprofit corporation that manages the Center. For three years the building was leased from New York City on a month-to-month basis; in 1980 a ten-year lease was obtained. The Center pays $18,000 a year rent and is responsible for all operation and maintenance of the building. User groups contribute towards rent and operating costs in proportion to space used.

The 122 Community Center, Inc.
150 First Avenue
New York, NY 10009
212-777-2790
Katharine B. Wolpe, President, Board of Directors

Old Nine, Brooklyn, New York

About twenty artists — dancers, painters, sculptors — rent studio

space in a large 1895 former school building in Brooklyn. The building, leased from the city by Prospect Heights Neighborhood Corporation for $1 a year, was taken over in 1976 as the first part of an ambitious neighborhood revitalization project. The corporation could not sustain the building on its own or fill up all five floors of the school with neighborhood programs. The artists, each of whom has a separate agreement with the corporation, not only immediately occupied about half of the building, but they also provide a stable source of income for part of the building operating expenses. The artists were also willing to accept space "as is" and perform renovations themselves.

Prospect Heights Neighborhood Corp.
279 Sterling Place
Brooklyn, NY 11238
212-783-2011
Margaret J. Cully, Director

Park District Arts Programs

Highcrest Center, Wilmette, Illinois

In 1977 the Wilmette School Board turned over a 55,000 square foot elementary school to the Wilmette Park District for community programs. The major thrust of courses offered to community residents of all ages is the arts -- silversmithing, ceramics, photography, silkscreen, drawing and painting, performing arts, and dance.

The auditorium is used for rehearsals and performances of the Wilmette Children's Theater, North Shore Theater Company, and the Wilmette Chorus.

The Park District pays no rent for the building, but is responsible for all maintenance. All courses are offered for a fee. The Park District notes that the center serves more people now than the building did when a school.

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Wilmette Park District
1200 Wilmette Avenue
Wilmette, IL 60091
312-256-6100
Rita Kallman, Graphic Arts Coordinator

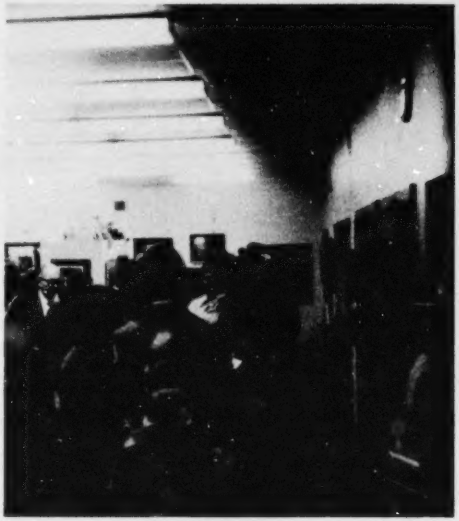
School District Initiative in Arts Reuse

**Eliot Center for the Arts,
St. Louis Park, Minnesota**

Although there were no organized arts groups in St. Louis Park, Minnesota, citizen interest in reusing a school as a community arts center was high. The community education program, jointly supported by the school board and the city, became the organizing force.

Following a pattern established in an earlier closed school, about half of the building is rented to a variety of nonprofit social service organizations or used for special school district programs. The remaining half is devoted to the arts.

Under the auspices of community education, during the first three years of operation, an arts council and a community theater group have been started. The former library has been renovated as a community gallery showing the work of local residents. Courses are offered in visual arts, music, and theater, and the state needlework guild holds meetings and workshops in the center.



Eliot Center for the Arts
6800 Cedar Lake Road
St. Louis Park, MN 55426
612-925-4300 Ext 236
Cindy Erickson, Coordinator

Home for Community Theater

Pittsfield Theater Guild, Illinois

After years of performing in temporary quarters, the Pittsfield Theater Guild settled into the second story of a small 1863 schoolhouse.

The local historical society has a master lease, uses part of the first floor for a museum, and sublets the second floor to the Guild for a token $1 rent.

Guild members renovated the space, installing new heating, air conditioning and wiring, and making other improvements. The Guild pays its own insurance, utilities, and maintenance costs.

With a home of its own, the Guild mounts its own theatrical productions, and has hosted touring companies, concerts, and dance recitals.

Pittsfield Theater Guild
Box 302
Pittsfield, IL 62363
217-285-4618
John Rob, Director

Independent Schools

Pasadena Art Workshop, California

The Pasadena Art Workshop is an independent, nonprofit educational institution that has been successively housed in two surplus schools. It shared a former elementary school with a Head Start program for five years, until the building was torn down to make way for a new post office. In 1979 the workshop moved to a former junior high school, where it shares what was the gymnasium building with a children's museum. The rest of the school has been taken over by the Community College.

The Workshop staff of artists organize programs with the public schools, teach private studio courses, and work with community groups.

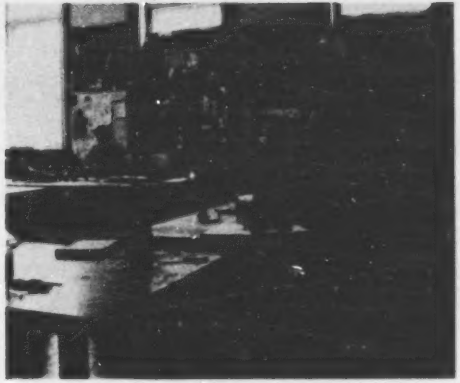
Pasadena Art Workshop
390 South El Molino Avenue
Pasadena, CA 91101
213-792-5101
Roberta Carasso, Program Director

College, Artists Collaborative and Public Schools

Jackson School Art Center, Washington, DC

The Jackson School Arts Center, located in a 17,000 square foot former elementary school in the Georgetown section of Washington, is a three-way partnership among a professional art school, the public school system, and an artists' collaborative.

First and second year classes of the Corcoran School of Art's bachelor of fine arts program are housed in the building. Studio space is available for members of A. Salon, Ltd., a nonprofit cooperative of professional artists working in a variety of media--painting, sculpture, printmaking, music, photography, writing, teaching, and arts management. The Montrose Gallery, cooperatively run by A. Salon members, shows and sells work by members as well as others. A. Salon members teach courses through American University's Continuing Education Program, as well as individually.



The Corcoran School and A. Salon have developed a number of programs with nearby Duke Ellington School of the Arts, a public high school, to help high school art students understand the practicalities of becoming professional artists. These include internships with A. Salon members, assistantships in operating the gallery, annual review of student portfolios and exhibition of student work, and workshops on securing, renovating and equipping studio space, and marketing work.

The Corcoran School and A. Salon have a ten-year agreement with the school board to use the building, rent free. The two organizations are responsible for insurance, utilities, and custodial salaries, which cost about $48,000 a year.

Few renovations were needed — a few walls were removed and areas partitioned into studios. Plans include converting a few large cloakrooms to darkrooms, and making the facility accessible to the handicapped.

Continuing development of cooperative programs with the public schools is an integral part of the use agreement with the board of education.

Jackson School Arts Center
R Street, between 30th and 31st
Washington, DC 20007
202-376-7341
George Koch, Vice-President, A. Salon, Ltd.
202-638-3211
Peter Marzio, Director, Corcoran School of Art

Professional Theater Companies Involved with Communities

Auburn Civic Theater, New York

The Auburn Civic Theater has expanded from its beginnings over twenty years ago as a children's theater providing learning and performance experiences to community children. The theater has grown to include professional resident companies; a production company that tours throughout the state during the summer; workshops and performances for and by all ages from elementary school through senior citizens; and educational programs in the public schools of a wide region.

The Theater's home base is a 1938 Art Deco high school building, shared with the Auburn public schools maintenance department and municipal athletic programs. The Theater has use of the ground floor and second floor of the building, almost half the available space. Space is used for offices, dance studio, workshop/classroom, complete costume shop and 2000 piece costume "library," and a 550-seat auditorium. The building has been ideal

for Theater needs, requiring only rewiring of electrical systems and installation of additional lighting equipment. These two improvements cost an estimated $12,000.

The Theater, a private nonprofit organization, has initiated many programs that are carried out under the auspices of the local public schools, the city, and a regional education agency. These include:

- performances, each year of a different period or type of play, in all public and parochial middle schools in Auburn by the resident winter company (Auburn public schools)
- workshops for school children, grades K-5, in language arts and communication through theater, for twenty schools in two counties (Board of Cooperative Educational Services)
- program in vocal music and movement for senior citizens, culminating in a musical production (city)
- "ACT Wagon," a touring production company of young professionals, during summer months both locally and throughout New York State (city)
- dance workshops at Auburn elementary schools and high school (city)

Auburn Civic Theater was located in another surplus school for four years prior to the current building, and also shared that building with the school district maintenance shop. The school board invited ACT to share that first building, with no payment for rent or utilities.

In the current building, the former high school, ownership is more complex. The building and land were assembled as part of an industrial development park zone by the city, and a Holiday Inn bought the building along with land for constructing an Inn. When the industrial development bonds are paid off, after ten years, Holiday Inn will have clear title to the land and building. In the meantime ACT has use of the space, rent free, pays $10,000 a year to Holiday Inn for its share of utilities, and does light maintenance for its own space. The city recreation department and the school district have similar agreements. Holiday Inn performs major maintenance and operates the facility. During the ten years of industrial bond subsidy, Holiday Inn pays no taxes, and can use the auditorium when needed to supplement meeting space in its new building for large conventions.

Auburn Civic Theater
Box 506
Auburn, NY 13021
315-255-1305
Edward Sayles, Executive Director

Performing Arts Foundation of Long Island, New York

Surplus school space allowed another nonprofit repertory theater group, the Performing Arts Foundation of Long Island, to expand its programs to include young audiences.

The PAF did not have enough space in its established adult theater (a railroad station) to develop children's programs. However, a surplus elementary school a few blocks away could be easily adapted. PAF leased space in the former school building: the principal's office suite remained as offices; the library became offices and space for workshops and teacher institutes; the cafeteria became rehearsal space; classrooms became costume shops for both the children's and adult theaters; and the auditorium. Only the auditorium required renovation. It had been a large room, with no seats. PAF built bleachers and a three-sided stage no more than eight rows from the furthest audience, and installed lighting.

PAF developed theater programs for children and performed over a hundred times a year to children coming from 250 schools in Long Island, as well as touring in the schools. In addition, PAF conducted workshops for school teachers in over a hundred schools, and operated a Theater Institute.

From 1975-79, PAF paid Harborsfield School District partial annual rent of about $3 per square foot. It also paid "in kind" by conducting workshops, providing performances in the local schools, and serving as artists in residence for free to the district. The former elementary school also housed a nursery school, children's opera group, and community functions.

As it turned out, the school space was interim housing for PAF. Once the children's theater program was well established, the group was ready to acquire permanent space. PAF nearly bought the surplus school, but decided that road access was inadequate. Instead, it bought land across from its original railroad station playhouse, and built the new Chapin Theater Center, for both adult and children's theater programs. The five years spent leasing surplus school space were crucial to developing expanded programs and financial stability to be able to acquire permanent facilities.

Performing Arts Foundation of Long Island
Chapin Theater Center
185 Second Street
Huntington Station, NY 11746
516-673-7070
Lynette Bianchi

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GUIDELINES

It's obvious from the case studies that surplus school space can be successfully reused for the arts, but that each project has unique features and conditions. However, gleaned from the experience of others who have succeeded, here are some general guidelines for you to consider.

Share space intelligently

Consider what spaces can be shared with other organizations -- space that is commonly needed, such as reception or exhibition space; and space that is only needed occasionally, such as meeting rooms and performance areas. Sharing space is an effective way to share costs and increase space utilization.

However, sharing space can lead to conflicts among users. To forestall difficulty, all users should jointly establish guidelines for use of shared space. Considerations include scheduling, security, and responsibility for maintaining the space.

If each user is to have some space for exclusive use, plan the use of the building to minimize conflict between users. For instance don't place rehearal areas next to quiet areas.

Be flexible about leases and other use agreements

Many use agreements and leases that arts organizations have with the owners of school buildings are unorthodox. A school board or municipality may not be legally able to "rent" space, or to rent space for less than its market value. The income it receives from rent may be encumbered for other uses. Therefore, you may pay no "rent," but be asked to "reimburse" for utilities and operation and maintenance costs; or be asked to contribute services instead.

A school board may be limited in the length of lease it may sign -- perhaps a five year maximum. Or because the community feels it may need the school again, the lease agreement may allow cancellation with one year's notice. The school district may retain an option to use part of the site at a later time.

You may not be allowed to resell, or sublet space without school board or municipal permission.

However, in considering lease agreements, don't forget your own needs as well. If you must raise money for renovation, you may not be able to get loans or grants unless your tenure is secure for a long time. Very short leases can be crippling to the users.

Consider how you can contribute to the educational program of the schools or to the community

If you are like most artists or arts organizations, you are searching for good space at low cost. The school board or municipal government is much more likely to give you a price break if you are contributing something in return. (Even if you pay for utilities and maintain your own space, you are not carrying the full cost of the space. Often the school board or municipality continues to assume the costs of grounds maintenance, insurance, and major repairs.)

As the case studies suggest, there are numerous ways the arts can contribute to the community and to the schools. These include classes, workshops, concerts and demonstrations for students and community residents; performances in the schools; in-service training for teachers; internships to students; and free community events.

Invest funds in upgrading the building

Arts organizations and artists too often fail to improve the physical appearance of former schools. Because schools frequently don't need major renovation, and because arts groups have little extra cash, the temptation is to change the name over the door and move in, as is.

However, a dreary classroom makes a dreary studio. The institutional color scheme, lighting, or entry may be "good enough," but only barely.

Invest at least some funds for improvements that will provide evidence that the place is serving a new use -- for the arts -- and that changes have been made to make the place attractive and supportive of its new life.

Beware of the costs of old buildings

Turn-of-the-century school buildings have many desirable features -- huge windows; high ceilings; oak floors; and nooks and crannies.

Be aware, however, that these buildings may also be inefficient to heat and may need major renovations such as new heating or plumbing equipment, or rewiring.

Get good estimates for the costs of needed repairs and the costs of operating and maintaining the building before committing yourself. And if you must make major investments be sure you will have use of the building for a long enough period to justify the investment.

Obtain professional help

Especially when deciding if reuse is economically feasible and if the space will meet your program needs, obtain professional advice. The advice may be available on a pro bono or volunteer basis, but even if you have to pay, it will be well worth the cost in the long run. Architects, engineers, building contractors, lawyers and accountants may each have a part to play in planning successful reuse.

Research ownership, zoning, legal and regulatory issues

School buildings are not always owned by the school board, but may be owned by the city, town, or county. In such cases, school buildings no longer needed for public education revert to some other agency of local government for disposition. Before venturing into reuse, it is important to know who owns the building, who will ultimately make the decision about reuse, and with whom you'll have to negotiate for rent, lease or sale.

It is also important to get answers to some questions that will affect the feasibility and costs of reuse. For instance:

- What is the applicable zoning? Will use by the arts be allowable? If not, what is the process for obtaining a zoning variance? What difference will it make if you are a tenant or an owner?
- Are there restrictions concerning occupancy? Can the arts occupy part of a building while the remainder is still a school? Does it make a difference if you're for profit or not-for-profit? What are tax implications to you, and to the school district?
- If you take over a school, what occupancy codes apply and will the building have to be "brought up to code"? Who is liable in case of bodily injury or loss?
- Is there existing debt on the building, bonds that are still being paid off? How does this affect you?

These are a few basic questions for which you need answers before going too far. They can usually be answered by the school district business officer and attorney, by the city attorney, or by the state education department.

Take the initiative

Schools that stand vacant are subject to rapid deterioration by vandalism, frozen pipes, and "suspicious" fires. To avoid vacant schools, education should be phased out, while other uses are phased in. Unfortunately many communities expend all their time and energy in coming to the decision to close, without at the same time developing reuse plans. By the time acceptable reuse is found, significant capital funds must be invested to reverse the ravages of abandonment.

So, if there is interest in reuse by the arts, it's important to be involved in the early stages of planning for closure by working with the school board, administration, and the inevitable citizen planning or advisory committee. Such participation, offering as it does a potential solution, usually will be welcomed.

Take initiative, too, in finding out whether there is surplus space in schools that continue to operate, if your needs might be met by one or a few classrooms. School boards and school district administrators may welcome proposals from artists or arts organizations -- particularly if they offer some benefit to children in the school.

Take the time to plan carefully

Most reuse problems stem from haste and inadequate planning, especially during the early stages when determining whether or not the project is feasible. Be sure to work out capital and operating costs and sources of income very carefully and realistically. Also, determine what types and amount of space you need and make sure the school meets your needs, hopefully without major renovation. If renovations are needed, determine how they can be phased as resources become available.

These, then, are a few general guidelines offered to help you reuse surplus school space for the arts. Even the most modest project may at times seem unduly complex, but the benefits to the arts, the schools and your community will be worth your perseverance.

Credits

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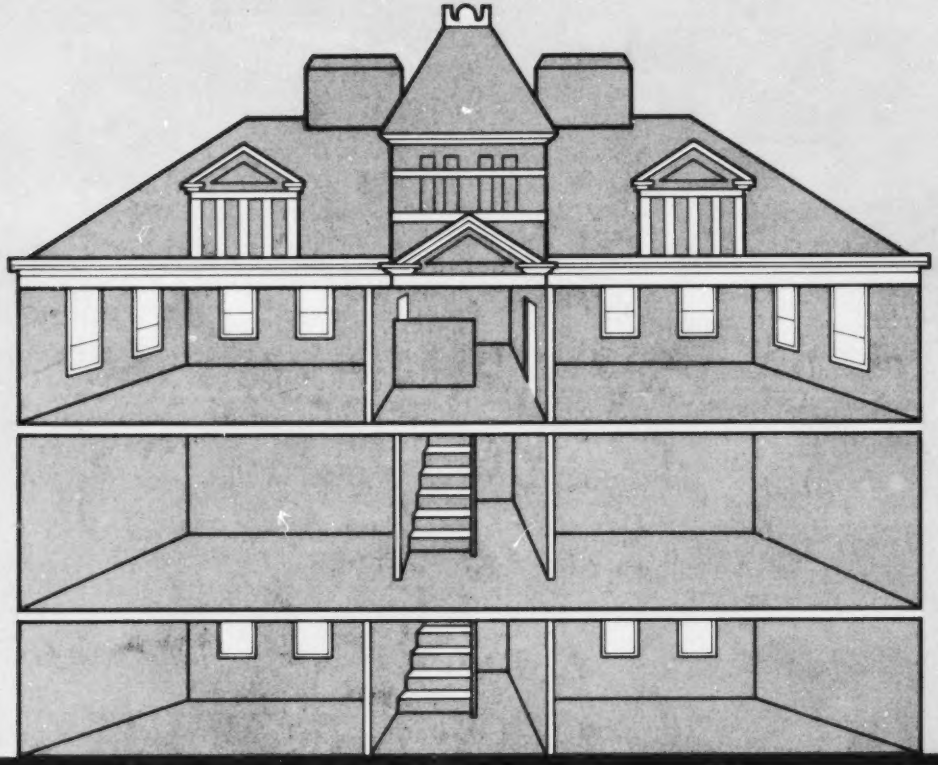

Educational Facilities Laboratories
a division of the Academy for Educational Development
680 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10019

Cover: School 33 Art Center, Baltimore, Maryland
A project of the Mayor's Committee on Art and Culture